

213 told me that he had persuaded a lesser sheikh to drink a bottle of rye.

622 A Shiekh, it may be explained, is another name for Chief,
554 although nowadays many of these petty rulers regard themselves as Princes; their desert forts have become palaces, and the advisers and secretaries who form the 'court' have been elevated to the rank of Ministers. This local grandeur is self-assumed, and the only genuine Prince in the Oman peninsula is the Sultan of Muscat. The Bedouins jokingly refer to the town sheikhs as 'Sand Kings', and the description seems to be an apt one.

551 The word 'sheikh' is fairly common as a name in Arabia,
554 although it does not connote royal blood or connexions; we had a coolie in the Fort who was called Sheikh Ahmed. Similarly, the word 'Saiyed' is much used as a name, but bears no relation to the title Saiyed, borne by alleged lineal descendants of the Prophet or his son-in-law.

776 The Arab world has practised the doctrines of Islam for close on thirteen centuries, yet even to-day one finds the people accepting ancient beliefs and superstitions which are the heritage of heathenism. The uneducated Arab firmly believes in the existence of djinns, and nothing will persuade him to venture near a *wadhi* or deserted building which tradition has made the home of these
777 monsters. Good and bad luck are ascribed by the faithful to Allah, Whose ways are wise and inscrutable; yet even the orthodox will admit—a trifle shamefacedly, perhaps—that such and such a calamity was caused by a malicious djinn, or that the death of his favourite camel was due to the evil eye of a neighbour.

755 Demoniactal possessions are cured by dancing to the throb of drums, a survival, surely, of African rites, and it is significant that most of these primitive beliefs are held by Arabs of African or negro descent. But then, is there such a thing as a pure-blooded Arab?

000 I have heard people describe themselves as being pure-blooded Irish, although they had less claim to consanguine purity than myself; they took no account of the Danish, Norman, Spanish and English invasions which swept the length and breadth of that small island over a thousand years. Just as the Irishman is basically Celt, the Arab is basically Semitic, but even the greatest ethnologist or anthropologist cannot track down with absolute certainty the ultimate origins of the Arab race; if it is one race. Head-measurements and the division of skulls into brachycephalic and dolchcephalic are all very well; they are useful for classifying the human

264 had lunch, but it was not possible to decline the dishes placed before us. In the centre of the dining-mat was a huge bowl of rice and steamed sheep, very fat and oily; chipatties, truffles, curry, sheep's liver, and pastry puff balls filled with honey. The sheikh presented me with a large piece of fat with his own hands, and I felt sick before it had entered my mouth.

272 After the meal we again washed our hands and sat drinking out of little brass cups of bitter coffee. Cigarettes were produced

576 and all smoked except the uncle from Baraimi. The conversation, as is customary during social calls, began with polite enquiries after one's health. Raschid then recounted some of his experiences in the hunting field, and sent his son to bring a pile of fine gazelle skins, trophies of the chase; one of especial beauty and fine marking he presented to me, together with a pair of horns. The wazir,

533 Hussein, looked as though he were tired of the conversation, and produced a blackwood reed from the folds of his *abbas* and began to play a wistful little tune. Abdul bin Hamid sang in a high-pitched voice and we sat back on our cushions and listened. The tune was monotonous and without melody, but it had a weirdly fascinating rhythm.

622 The sheikh, whose tales of the hunt were thus rudely interrupted, grew restless; he belched aggressively and pulled at his beard. At length, losing all patience, he rose abruptly and signalled us to follow him through the courtyard. Hussein went on playing his melancholy tune, so we wandered through the fort with Raschid and his daughter. Scores of ragged children came into the courtyard to stare at us; they were nothing to do with the sheikh, unless they were children of his servants, and he took no notice of them. With his twinkling blue eyes, humorous mouth and hawk-like nose, he might have been an Eastern king, benevolent and wise, surrounded by his subjects. He had perfect teeth, stained at the edges by tobacco, and on his finely-shaped hand wore a large cornelian stone, engraved with an account of his descent. The Arabs do not as a rule have a crest or heraldic design, although some of the sheikhs display a badge, usually in the form of a crescent or sometimes a bird or lion which is engraved on seals and the backs of chairs.

291 Raschid on this occasion wore a very barbaric-looking turban of white and purple Kashmir wool and looked more like a pirate

231 than ever. When we had seen over the fort, many of the rooms of which were completely bare, he conducted us to the stables